

I'm from BOSTON



*"How complete!" said the wayfarer
of ancient days –
"I'm from Boston! Nothing more
needs to be said!"*

OLD STORY

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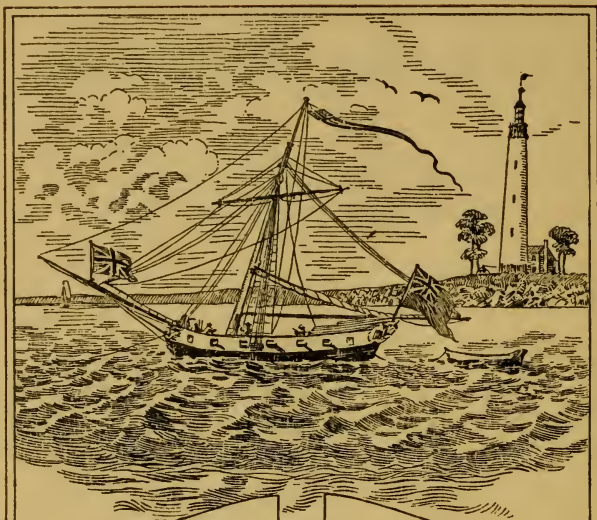
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Scenes from the Living Past
Illustrated by Picture and Story



Mark Antony De Wolfe Howe

The ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS
BOSTON



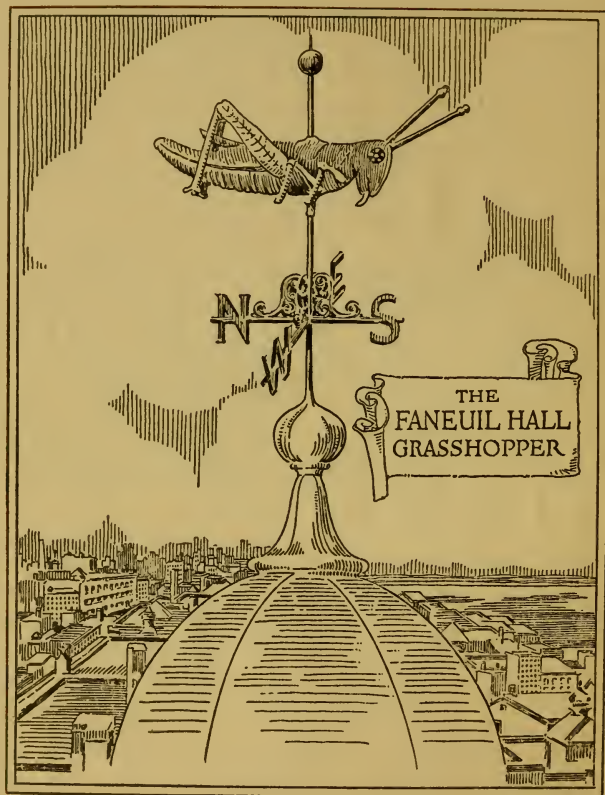
The first American LIGHT HOUSE

*Adapted from a mezzotint
engraved by William Burgis
in 1729 and dedicated by him
"To the Merchants of Boston."*

BOSTON LIGHT, on Beacon, or Little Brewster, Island at the entrance to Boston Harbor, has many associations with historic persons and events. The very name of the island on which it stands connects it with Elder William Brewster, of Plymouth fame. On this island, in 1716, the first lighthouse on the whole American coast was built. Before the Revolution the building suffered much from fire and lightning; then it suffered still more at the hands of men, both British and American. During the Siege of Boston there were two lively fights for its possession. But the British had the last word at this juncture, for their final act in the evacuation of Boston, as one of their ships sailed out of the harbor, was to blow up the lighthouse. Since 1783, when the present structure was built, it has been from time to time enlarged and modernized.

The American who keeps turning up in every corner of our eighteenth century history is Benjamin Franklin, and with Boston Light he had his characteristic contact. The first keeper of the light was one George Worthylake, an experienced waterman who owned a farm on Lovell's Island. On Monday, November 3, 1718, while he was attempting to bring his wife and daughter to town in a small boat, all three were drowned. They were buried at Copp's Hill. Franklin, twelve years old at the time, and recently apprenticed to his brother James, a printer, seized the occasion to write a ballad, "The Lighthouse Tragedy," which, with another, he sold in broadsides on the Boston streets.

"This flattered my vanity," he wrote in his *Autobiography*, "but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars." His early biographer, the inventive Weems, declared that later Franklin became so mortified with these ballads "that he could not bear the sight of them, but constantly threw into the fire every copy that fell in his way." Apparently none escaped, and the race of "collectors" has been cruelly thwarted.

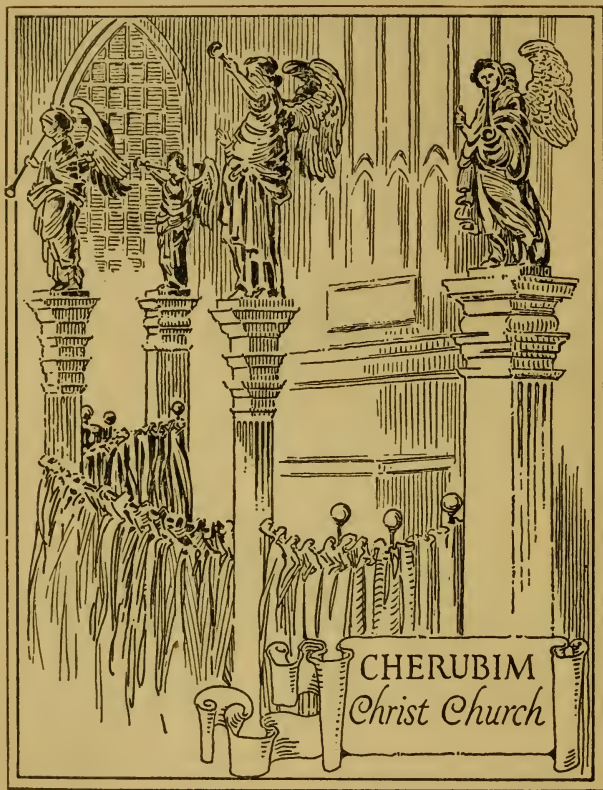


SHEM DROWNE was a famous coppersmith in his day. One piece of his handiwork conspicuously survives in the weather-vane surmounting the belfry of Faneuil Hall. This building was not a "cradle of liberty," but a headquarters of trade, when Peter Faneuil built it in 1742. That emblem of nimbleness, the grasshopper, had stood before as an emblem of trade, in the vane of the Royal Exchange of London, from which the suggestion of the Faneuil Hall vane is said, in one version of its origin, to have been taken. In another, the fact that a grasshopper was the bringer of good fortune to Shem Drowne as a boy is related.

Deacon Drowne wrought this grasshopper with as much care as if it were to be scrutinized at close range. Once when it had to be mended, a page of writing was found within it, addressed "To my Brethren and Fellow Grasshoppers," recording its erection by Shem Drowne, May 25, 1742, its repair by its maker ("my old master above"), after it "fell in y^e year 1753 Nov. 18 early in y^e morning by a great earthquake," and ending as follows:

"Again like to have met with my Utter Ruin by Fire / but hoping Timely from my Public Scituation / Came of with Broken bones and much Bruised / Cured and fixed / old Master's Son Thomas Drowne June 28th 1768 / and Though I will promise to / Discharge my Office, yet I shall vary as y^e Wind."

As late as 1886, James Russell Lowell wrote in one of his letters of "the gallery of Funnle Hall (they call it *fan-you-well* now)." Further testimony to the old pronunciation of the word is borne by a rough inscription at the foot of the slab on Peter Faneuil's tomb, in the Granary Burying Ground. It was presumably made by a workman who wished to identify the stone, and seems to read, "P. Funnel." Of the "Fun" there is no doubt. The surviving Bostonians who use this pronunciation are as rare as those who still call Wollaston and Braintree "Woolston" and "Brantrey," and rarer than those who continue to give to Bromfield the sound of "Broomfield."

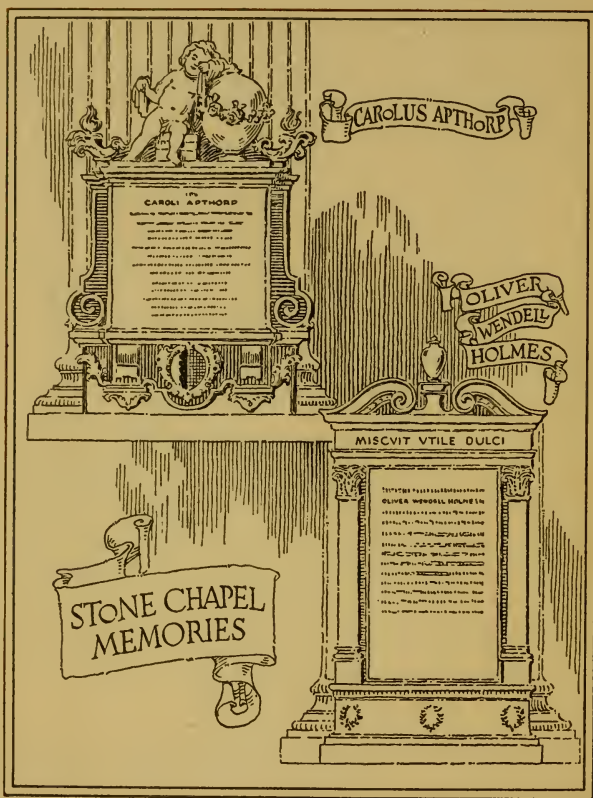


CHRIST CHURCH, at the North End, now commonly called the "Old North Church," the earlier name of a meeting-house destroyed for firewood by British soldiers during the Siege of Boston, has other distinctions besides the belfry in which were hung the signal lanterns that started Paul Revere on his resounding ride. Among these is the unique possession of four cherubim — or statuettes of trumpeters, so designated — once captured by privateers. In the lack of definite legend to explain why they were called cherubim, it may be suggested that they are companions to the seraphim who "continually do cry" in the organ and choir loft, on the four corners of which the trumpeters stand.

These little figures are a strange relic of the French and Indian War. They were intended for a French Canadian church on the St. Lawrence. Their lodgment in the oldest place of worship now standing in Boston — the church was built in 1723 — is explained on a tablet in the church, which reads as follows: "In memory of/ Thomas James Gruchy/ Junior Warden of this Church/ and Merchant adventurer from Jersey/ who in parlous times as/ Captain of the Privateer Queen of Hungary/ took from a French ship in the year 1746/ the four figures of cherubim now in front/ of the organ."

This memorial is by no means the only reminder of the maritime background which made Christ Church typical of Eighteenth Century Boston. Another tablet commemorates the fact that the spire is "due to the bounty of Honduras Merchants," of whom one likes to think as sitting in "The Bay Pew," now inscribed, "This Pew for the use of the Gentlemen of the Bay of Honduras," and dropping doubloons and pieces of eight into the contribution plates.

In Christ Church, moreover, is to be found one of the rare copies of the "Vinegar Bible," so called from the immortal misprint which substituted for "The Parable of the Vineyard," "The Parable of the Vinegar."



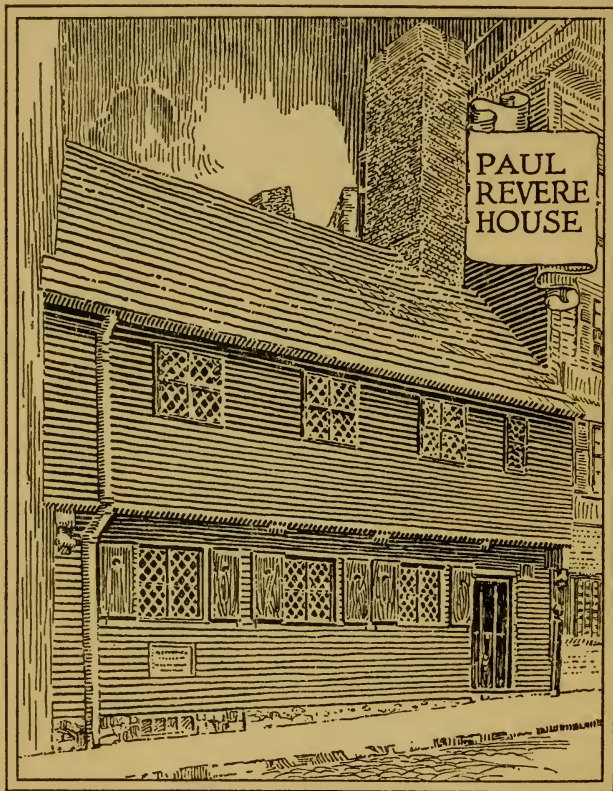
FOR some time after the Revolution King's Chapel was commonly called the "Stone Chapel." There is now no disposition to gulp at the word "King's." Indeed, the Colonial flavor of the Chapel and its graveyard, a strong Church of England flavor, contributes the chief element of interest to this landmark. Within its walls or in the Chapel graveyard the imagination may easily restore to life the "subjects" of Smibert and Copley. A homelier picture is to be found in "The Recollections of Samuel Breck"—an old Bostonian turned Philadelphian. The story has to do with the building of the present church, begun in 1749, and with an Irish laborer's quickness of wit and action.

"The workmen," wrote Breck, "had agreed among themselves when roofing the church, that on the signal being made to leave off work at dinner-time the last man down should treat the others to drink. A little, tight-built, active Irishman was always foremost in getting downstairs, and daily boasted that they never had caught him and never should.

"Upon this a scheme was laid to make him treat. His business was to carry up slates for the roof; and one day, when he was at the far end of the building, the bell was rung a few minutes earlier than usual. The workmen, who were all in the secret, rushed to the tower and then to the stairs, when Patrick looked round and instantly guessed their intention. But determined not to be last, he squatted down on a loose piece of slate and fearlessly slid off the roof into the burying-place, where he happened to light, with the slate under him, in a sitting position, between two gravestones, and wholly uninjured.

"He sprang upon his feet and ran to the church door, where he met the conspirators at the foot of the stairs and triumphantly claimed his treat as usual."

In the days that have come this early aviator and his triumph provide refreshing thoughts.



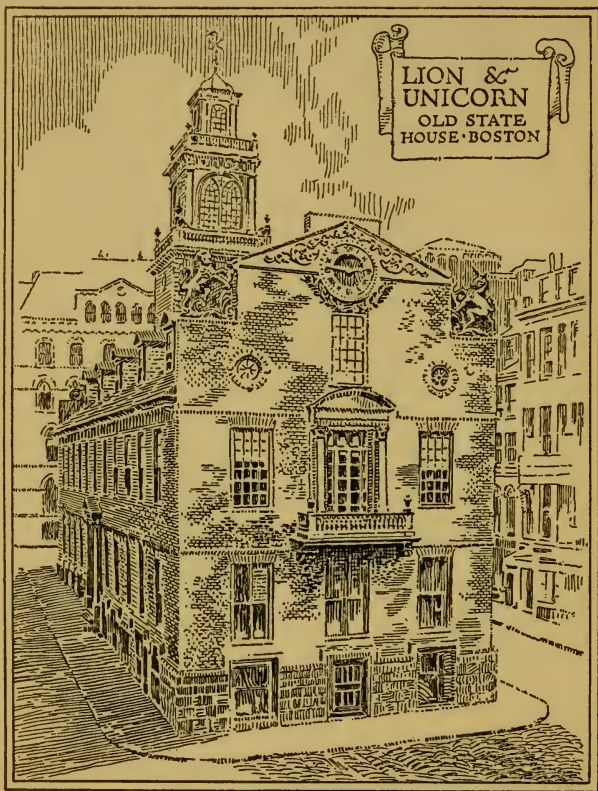
AN EARLY process of Americanization was the changing of the name of Apollos Rivoire, a French Huguenot refugee in Boston, to Paul Revere. His new name was handed on to his son, and later became a household word through the agency of a single poem. If the older Paul was buried without a funeral sermon on the text, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" the golden opportunity of a Puritan minister was carelessly lost.

The younger Paul Revere did many notable things, mounted and afoot, besides making his "midnight ride." As a citizen of the North End, he exerted a strong personal influence. He was a remarkable artizan, and, by token of his best products in silverware, an artist. He made all manner of things, from the copper fastenings of the Constitution to artificial teeth.

The North Square house in which he lived was reclaimed and restored not many years ago by a private association formed for the purpose. With this house one characteristic incident in the life of Paul Revere may be closely associated.

The "Boston Massacre" occurred March 5, 1770. The first anniversary of the event was celebrated with great solemnity in Boston. Bells were tolled from noon to one o'clock, and at night from nine to ten; a public oration was delivered—and Paul Revere on his own account made a telling commemoration of the local tragedy. This was the designing and execution of three transparencies, displayed on the night of the anniversary in the upper windows of his house. Two of them represented scenes of the "Massacre," the third a female figure of America, with her foot on the head of a fallen Grenadier. "The spectators," in the words of a contemporaneous description, "were struck with solemn silence and their countenances were covered with a melancholy glow."

Here is a scene on which the imaginative visitor to the Paul Revere House may exercise his imagination with little difficulty and with large results in the visualizing of an impressive spectacle.



THE lion and unicorn on the Old State House, at the head of State Street, are animals of a third generation later than those which first occupied this position. At about the same time that King Street became State Street the original animals were destroyed by the crowd that made a bonfire, down the street, of all the emblems of royalty it could collect, after hearing the Declaration of Independence read, July 18, 1776, from the balcony of the State House, then called the Town House.

From this balcony the death of George II and the accession of George III had been proclaimed. Washington stood on it when he received a public ovation and reviewed a great procession in 1789. Picturesque associations in great number cluster about the building, without and within.

Like those other fabulous creatures of the British Isles, the snakes of Ireland, the lion and the unicorn were long non-existent. It was not till 1882, when the Old State House was rescued from the low estate into which it had fallen as a nucleus of business offices, that a restoration of the building was undertaken, and a new lion and unicorn were substituted for the architectural scrolls which were to be seen in their places for the better part of the century. This particular point of restoration became a matter of zealous local controversy. It should not be forgotten that the gilded eagle on the western end of the building was perched there to placate certain patriots.

The present lion and unicorn are of even later date than 1882. The creatures then erected were carved of wood, and began, before many years had passed, to show signs of decay. They were accordingly replaced, soon after 1900, by the present figures, made of copper. And their wooden predecessors? They beautify the lawn of an American citizen, of Armenian descent and name, in the pleasant suburb of Chestnut Hill. So deals the new democracy with the symbols of a system that has passed.



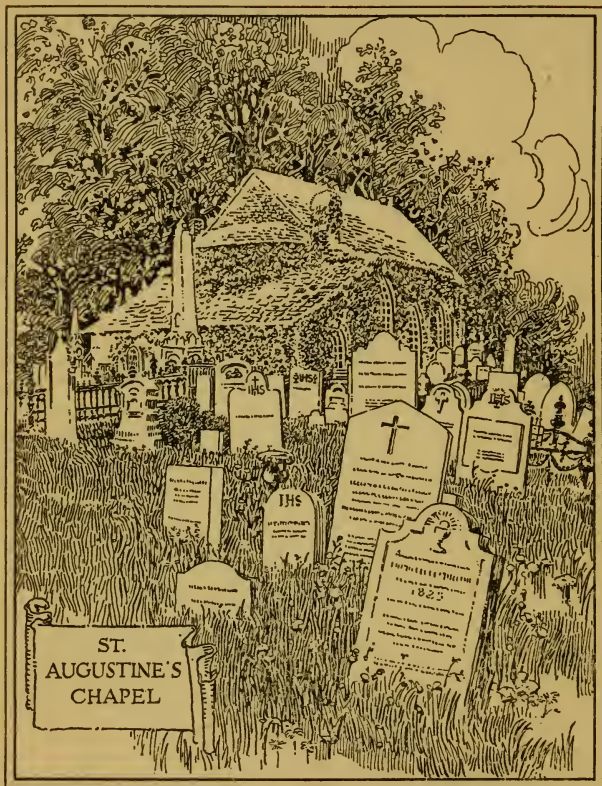
THERE are two neighboring buildings on Cambridge Street, in the West End of Boston, which have been turned to good purposes never imagined when the buildings were new. They are the West End Branch of the Boston Public Library, formerly the West Church, on one corner of Lynde Street, and the Headquarters of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, formerly the Harrison Gray Otis House, on the other corner.

The Otis house was built in 1795, while the earlier West Church, built in 1737, was still standing. Before 1806, when the present West Church building was erected, Otis had moved on to the new house, now 85 Mount Vernon Street, which Bulfinch designed for him. A few years later he built what has long been called the Austin house, at 45 Beacon Street, and still later erected his country-seat of Oakley, now the Oakley Country Club. These four houses, all surviving a century, are a remarkable monument to one occupant.

The West Church boasted a distinguished line of ministers, including the father of James Russell Lowell. A sermon preached in 1750 by one of them, the Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, indignantly repudiating King Charles I as "Saint and Martyr," has often been called "the morning gun of the Revolution." In the Preface to this sermon he wrote:

"People have no security against being unmercifully *priest-ridden*, but by keeping all imperious BISHOPS and other CLERGYMEN who love to 'lord it over God's heritage' from getting their *foot* into the *stirrup* at all. Let them be once fairly *mounted*, and their 'beasts, the laity,' may *prance* and *founce* about to no purpose: and they will at length be so *jaded* and *hack'd* by these reverend *jockies*, that they will not even have *spirits* enough to complain that their *backs* are *galled*; or, like Balaam's ass, to 'rebuke the madness of the prophet.'"

The irony of it is that in 1852 Mayhew's grandson, Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright, was consecrated Bishop in New York.



ST.
AUGUSTINE'S
CHAPEL

THE century is the most convenient yard-stick for the measuring of American antiquities. In Boston, once so overwhelmingly Puritan, it is not a little surprising to find a Roman Catholic chapel and cemetery more than a hundred years old, and, at the same time, to discover in the heart of South Boston a spot of beauty and suggestion quite without parallel in the rest of the city. Such a spot is St. Augustine's. Any Bostonian with a trace of the "showman's instinct," when once he has seen it himself, will want to escort the visiting sight-seer to this romantic little "God's acre" in the unromantic surroundings of Dorchester, Tudor, and Sixth Streets.

The land for the cemetery was acquired and the chapel built in 1818, under the auspices of the saintly Cheverus, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Boston, the friend of the best men of all faiths in the Boston of his day, extending from 1796 to 1823.

To Bishop Cheverus the little chapel of brick, with its long, pointed Gothic windows of plain glass, its roof of generous slates, its walls now thickly verdured, was primarily the resting-place for the body of his friend, Father Mantignon, a French priest at whose invitation he himself had come to Boston. Mantignon's memory is honored in a mural tablet. Under the floor of the chapel a score of other priests have since been buried, each commemorated with a large stone inscribed with the identic, impartial words, "Of your charity pray for the repose of the soul of" thus and so, beneath whose name the letters "R. I. P." are cut.

The graveyard without, bounded by four streets, contains rows of English elms such as the lover of trees may well go far to see. The graves beneath them, marked with tombstones of varying beauty, yet richly mellowing beneath the touch of time, are so thickly clustered that the original purpose of the cemetery seems completely fulfilled. The names of the dead and the places of their birth speak eloquently of the Ireland from which the tide of emigration to Boston set in after the time of Mantignon and Cheverus.

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